UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/86
30 January 1998
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

LETTER DATED 30 JANUARY 1998 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey the attached letter dated 30 January 1998 which I have received from the Chairman of the International Monitoring Committee established pursuant to the mandate of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) (see annex).

Attached to the letter is the third periodic report of the Member States participating in MISAB, as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1136 (1997) of 6 November 1997. I should be grateful if you would bring the letter and its enclosure to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

Letter dated 30 January 1998 from the Chairman of the International Monitoring Committee addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the third report, covering the period from 5 January to 4 February 1998, requested by the Security Council in paragraph 7 of its resolution 1136 (1997) concerning the situation in the Central African Republic.

(Signed) Gen. Amadou Toumani TOURÉ
Chairman of the International
Monitoring Committee

Appendix

Third report to the Security Council pursuant to resolution 1136 (1997) concerning the situation in the Central African Republic

(2 February 1998)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 3829th meeting, the Security Council unanimously adopted its resolution 1136 (1997), which was essentially a continuation of its earlier resolution 1125 (1997). The Council requested the Member States participating in MISAB, namely, the International Monitoring Committee to supervise the implementation of the Bangui Agreements, which represents them, to provide periodic reports to the Council at least every month through the Secretary-General.

2. This third report describes developments in the situation in the Central African Republic from 5 January to 4 February 1998.

II. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

3. The International Monitoring Committee to supervise the implementation of the Bangui Agreements, chaired by General Amadou Toumani Touré, is the body that directs the actions of MISAB, since it receives the necessary political guidance directly from the heads of State concerned, and especially from the President of the Gabonese Republic, who is Chairman of the International Mediation Committee.

4. MISAB is under the patronage of President El Hadj Omar Bongo of the Gabonese Republic, senior head of State of the International Mediation Committee. It is under the political authority of General Touré, Chairman of the International Monitoring Committee.

III. LOGISTICAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL MONITORING COMMITTEE

5. It should be noted that since its establishment by the heads of the States members of the International Mediation Committee, the International Monitoring Committee has received logistical and technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

IV. LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO THE MISSION

6. As indicated in the previous reports, MISAB receives logistical support from the participating States, France and the Government of the Central African Republic. It also received support previously from the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

7. In its previous reports, the International Monitoring Committee had occasion to welcome the establishment of a Trust Fund to provide financial support for MISAB. It regrets, however, that this Fund has not received any contributions that could have provided long-term support for the Mission's activities.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BANGUI AGREEMENTS

8. The Bangui Agreements of 25 January 1997, the outcome of strenuous efforts by the Committee on Consensus-building and Dialogue, endorsed and chaired by General Amadou Toumani Touré, Chairman of the International Monitoring Committee, constitute the indispensable basis for the establishment and strengthening of peace and the achievement of national reconciliation, a necessary stage in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Central African Republic.

9. The implementation of these Agreements was planned in accordance with a timetable established by the International Monitoring Committee and accepted by all. This timetable is being implemented, even if the dates initially mentioned have been adjusted. It must be acknowledged that there has been a certain delay in the full implementation of certain provisions deemed important by one or another of the parties. This is due, in particular, to various incidents which have lined the perilous path of the national reconciliation process. It is worth recalling here that the 24 provisions of the Agreements were grouped under seven main headings in the timetable established by the International Monitoring Committee, namely:

(a) Formation of a government of national union;

(b) Adoption of an amnesty law covering those who committed offences in the context of the third rebellion;

(c) Disarmament;

(d) Implementation of the recommendations of the General Meeting on National Defence;

(e) Situation of former heads of State;

(f) Suspension, then abandonment of the judicial enforcement of the parliamentary audit;

(g) Organization of a national reconciliation conference.

Provisions fully implemented

10. Of these provisions, those relating to the formation of a government of national union, the adoption of an amnesty law covering offences in the context of the third rebellion and the situation of former heads of State can be regarded as fully implemented, even if the decree enforcing the above-mentioned law has yet to be promulgated.

Provisions almost fully implemented

11. Disarmament is proceeding, even if certain concerns persist as to the possible importing of military weapons. The disarmament operations in the town of Bangui took place in accordance with a methodology described in the previous reports. The results speak for themselves:

(a) Heavy weapons: 92.12 per cent;

(b) Light weapons: 56.76 per cent;

(c) Munitions of various types: 451,709 units;

(d) Explosives and detonators: 26,672 units.

12. Considering the various factors mentioned in the previous reports, it is easy to understand why the recovery of all light weapons remains an elusive goal, despite all the means and strategies employed. While some hope remains for the fruitful continuation of disarmament operations, both in Bangui and in remote areas of the country, it would be illusory to think that the recovery of light weapons will be as extensive as that of heavy weapons.

13. Reports, or rather, rumours, circulate persistently, alleging that a quantity of weapons difficult to estimate was imported into the country on various dates by figures belonging to both the presidential majority and the opposition. Despite the willingness of the International Monitoring Committee and MISAB to recover these weapons, if they exist, very few reliable signs or indications support the authenticity of these claims. None of the investigations or searches carried out in this connection have yielded any results so far. Such rumours darken the atmosphere considerably in this country, where peace is still fragile. In any event, the International Monitoring Committee and MISAB believe that the disarmament operations are not yet finished, and are continuing to devote painstaking and patient attention to them.

14. It is clear that the accounts relating to weapons recovery pertain only to arms and munitions taken from the State armories. This is why the International Monitoring Committee and MISAB have remained vigilant and have not ignored any information provided to them concerning weapons caches.

15. The provisions concerning the parliamentary audit have had varying degrees of success, and a new parliamentary procedure is being carried out on the basis of a reworked draft. It is to be hoped that this draft will not be rejected as well. The International Monitoring Committee made a modest contribution to the preparation of this draft in order to ensure that all the legitimate concerns expressed by deputies during the first reading have been taken into account. A decision is expected no later than 4 February.

Provisions being implemented

16. As to the provisions concerning the implementation of the recommendations of the General Meeting on National Defence, the Commission on the Restructuring of the Defence and Security Forces, chaired by the Minister of Defence under the supervision of the Chairman of the International Monitoring Committee, filed its report on 29 January 1998. This Commission provides the framework in which compromise solutions acceptable to all can be worked out for the main recommendations in dispute. These are the recommendations relating to the "dissolution" of the Section d'enquête, de recherche et de la documentation and the Centre national de recherche et d'investigation and those relating to the "reduction of the staff" of the Presidential Guard. As the work of the Commission on the Restructuring of the Defence and Security Forces proceeded, the idea of redefining the respective functions of the Section d'enquête, de recherche et de la documentation and of the Centre national de recherche et d'investigation to make them consistent with respect for human rights began to take precedence over outright dissolution, which the opposition continues to demand, and keeping these entities intact, as the authorities intend. In the end, the Commission on the Restructuring of the Defence and Security Forces decided on:

(a) Dissolution of the Section d'enquête, de recherche et de la documentation and assignment of its members to their original units;

(b) Dissolution of the Centre national de recherche et d'investigation;

(c) Establishment of a documentation bureau to take charge of national security;

(d) Strict implementation of Presidential Decree No. 94/87 of 9 March 1994 concerning the Presidential Guard, which conferred on the Guard functions accepted by all (excluding abuses, which were noted and deplored), and, consequently, restriction of the number of members of that unit.

A formal decision by the head of State in this matter is expected at any moment. It is likewise understood that the exercise of restructuring the defence and security forces would take into account the problem of the members of the Presidential Guard. Moreover, the project initiated by UNDP on demobilization, retraining and reintegration of the Central African armed forces, financing for which remains open to all other potential donors, has recently been launched with the arrival in Bangui on 10 January 1998 of the project head, Mr. Gonzales. This project should help the army to become more capable of operating as a truly republican army, and would thus fulfil a number of recommendations made by the General Meeting on National Defence.

17. Lastly, in the framework of implementing the provisions concerning the organization of a national reconciliation conference, many activities that were recommended during the memorable meetings of the Committee on Consensus-building and Dialogue have been scheduled by the preparatory committee and are being implemented, despite the various difficulties encountered by the organizers. In this context, thanks to logistical and financial support from UNDP, the International Monitoring Committee and the Ministry of Human Rights, National

Reconciliation and Democratic Culture have, with the support of the various ministries and technical services concerned, organized the following activities:

(a) Awareness-raising seminars in various regions of the country between 18 November 1997 and 31 January 1998;

(b) A youth meeting in Bangui on 13 and 14 January 1998;

(c) A Central African women's forum on 16 and 17 January 1998;

(d) A forum on compensation for damage caused by the rebellions, to be held on 23 and 24 January 1998.

18. A forum to assess the implementation of the Bangui Agreements and one to assess the military situation will be held during the second week of February 1998. The conclusions of these various seminars and forums will constitute an undeniable contribution, a data bank on the crisis, that will be made available to the conference participants.

19. The national reconciliation conference, initially scheduled for the period from 10 to 14 February 1998, has been postponed until the end of February (specifically, the week of 23-28 February) in order to make it possible to provide better working conditions. For the time being, the preparatory committee for the conference is tackling the final preparations, namely:

(a) Preparing various summaries which will serve as working documents for the conference;

(b) Drawing up a list of participants;

(c) Solving various logistical problems;

(d) Organizing technical aspects.

20. For various reasons, senior officials of the Groupe des onze partis politiques de l'opposition (Group of Eleven) and the four groups of affiliated trade unions decided to withdraw from the preparatory committee for the conference. This situation is not likely to galvanize the current process. For this reason, the International Monitoring Committee is now endeavouring to negotiate a modus vivendi between these opposition figures and the authorities, who have been accused by the opposition of resorting to acts contrary to the spirit of the Bangui Agreements and of not wishing to implement certain provisions of these agreements.

21. The International Monitoring Committee has spared neither time nor patience in using its good offices to smooth out the difficulties which arise almost daily. Everything proceeds as if all parties were attempting to score as many points as possible prior to the national reconciliation conference, forgetting that the conference is neither an end in itself, nor the culmination of the normalization process in a country deeply marked by two years of a multifaceted crisis, but an essential stage on the way to a lasting solution.

22. One concern about the organization of the national reconciliation conference is widely shared by various quarters, namely that a favourable climate for reconciliation should be created, with the following necessary and useful conditions:

(a) Full implementation of the various provisions of the Bangui Agreements, in other words, completion of the activities included in the timetable of the International Monitoring Committee (pursuit of disarmament operations, settlement of the question of the parliamentary audit, indication of political will to make use of the recommendations of the General Meeting on National Defence);

(b) Continuation of the necessary and useful efforts (including a stepping up of the diplomatic offensive) to find a solution to the financial situation, which remains a cause of concern;

(c) Launching of initiatives designed to find a solution to the problem of the victims of the rebellions;

(d) Reassuring indications of prospects of reconstruction, rehabilitation and economic recovery.

23. The specific provision relating to the adoption of a new electoral code, and its corollary, the creation of an independent electoral commission, is being implemented; it is known that the relevant texts have already been prepared for submission to the National Assembly for consideration and adoption. The International Monitoring Committee, faithful to its mission, is paying close attention to all these operations. It continues to do so in a spirit of neutrality and impartiality in order to achieve credible results acceptable to all.

24. Overall, there are no items on the timetable of the International Monitoring Committee that have not yet been either fully or partially implemented, even if many useless obstacles crop up frequently on the road to their implementation. With a little more political will here and a little more judgement there, the International Monitoring Committee, in cooperation with the other political and social actors in the country, will strive to create the necessary conditions for the further implementation of the Bangui Agreements.

VI. COOPERATION WITH THE CENTRAL AFRICAN AUTHORITIES AND THE VARIOUS GROUPS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

25. For several weeks, an uneasiness and a certain restlessness have been noted within various political parties belonging to both the presidential majority and the opposition. Several recent events are worth mentioning, as they seem to illustrate fairly clearly a situation in which, with the elections a few months away, the roar of ambitions is battling the impulse to settle accounts:

(a) The dismissal of Mr. Charles Massi, a member of the Mouvement de Libération du Peuple Centrafricain (MLPC), from his post as Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Farming for "misappropriation of public funds" and

other acts of embezzlement, according to the official press releases, is continuing to elicit reactions and to take on more political than judicial overtones. The International Monitoring Committee, alerted by a letter from Mr. Massi, who requested protection from MISAB, claiming that his life was in danger, took care to draw the attention of the country's authorities to the unfortunate slippage which this situation was likely to generate. The Committee refrained from commenting on or appreciating the twofold measure taken with respect to Mr. Massi, namely, dismissal and investigation, which it deems to be a matter pertaining to the sovereignty of the Central African State. Mr. Massi believes that the establishment of the Forum Démocratique pour la Modernité (FODEM), a political association which he heads, is the source of his current difficulties. It is important to emphasize here that a group of 11 deputies from various parliamentary groupings took a stand in favour of Mr. Massi on 14 January 1998 in a document denouncing what they referred to as "the harassment suffered by Mr. Charles Massi, former Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Farming". The concern of the International Monitoring Committee is and remains the preservation and strengthening of the hard-won peace.

(b) Likewise, the recent resignation of Mr. Kossi Bella, an MLPC deputy, and the resounding support which he currently enjoys in Bangui, cannot fail to raise questions for any informed observer of Central African politics. It should be stressed that Mr. Kossi Bella is a founding member of the party headed by President Patassé and that he seems to have a certain hearing within and outside the party. The current political context in the Central African Republic appears to be difficult, as it is full of unforeseen events. Greater effort on the part of the International Monitoring Committee will be required to make the Central African political class understand that the situation calls for moderation, reflection, restraint, leniency, tolerance, acceptance of the right to be different and forgiveness. All attitudes to the contrary threaten to jeopardize everything. The Committee is counting on the patriotic spirit and the good will of religious groups, women's organizations, youth associations and other elements of civil society to exorcise the demon of hatred and vengeance.

(c) The recent withdrawal of the Parti Social Démocrate (PSD), led by former Prime Minister Enoch Dérant Lakoue, from the Conseil Démocratique des Partis Politiques de l'Opposition (CODEPO) (Democratic Council of Opposition Political Parties) denotes a certain uneasiness among the various moderate opposition parties.

(d) The confirmed withdrawal of the Mouvement pour la Démocratie et le Développement (MDD), led by President David Dacko, from the Group of Eleven, and the relatively moderate positions which this party has taken on various questions, also indicate a new configuration on the Central African political chessboard with which the International Monitoring Committee must henceforth reckon in endeavouring to resolve the crisis.

26. The International Monitoring Committee met the President and head of State of the Central African Republic on several occasions in order to provide him with regular updates on the issues remaining to be resolved and questions relating to security, which has recently been undermined by a revival of the roadblock phenomenon, leading to criminal acts of extortion in some parts of the country, and a resurgence of traditional urban banditry.

27. While urban banditry is being addressed by the activities of the Central Office for the Suppression of Banditry (OCRB), the roadblock phenomenon is currently being combated only through rather modest means, including, in particular, the organization of a type of self-defence force among the populations at risk. In this connection, the International Monitoring Committee recommended to the head of State and the Central African Government that subregional cooperation with adjoining countries experiencing the same phenomenon should be organized and strengthened. The mandate conferred on MISAB does not allow it to be directly involved in the fight against insecurity of this nature, which does not appear to be directly linked to the rebellion.

28. In view of the numerous difficulties that have arisen in the context of the preparations for the national reconciliation conference, the International Monitoring Committee remains in constant contact with all the political and social actors in the country.

VII. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

29. Pursuant to the Security Council's request to the Secretary-General in resolution 1136 (1997) to provide a report within three months on the implementation of that resolution, and following the stay in Bangui from 6 to 13 December 1997 of a multidisciplinary mission from the United Nations Secretariat, a political delegation headed by the personal envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Hédi Annabi, had an opportunity during its visit from 6 to 8 January 1998 to appreciate the evolution of the political, military, security and economic and social situation. The results of the report which the Secretary-General provided to the Security Council on this subject are eagerly awaited here in Bangui, both by the Central African authorities and political class and by the International Monitoring Committee and MISAB.

30. Everyone in Bangui (the political class, civil society, the military and foreigners) is convinced of the need for the presence after 6 February 1998 of a military and security force which would help consolidate the peace and stimulate the process of national reconciliation. Everyone recognizes that even though the elections are not an end in themselves, their smooth conduct can only help stabilize the situation.

31. Despite the excellent results obtained in agricultural production (in both cash crops and food crops), the Central African Republic, where industrial and commercial activities have clearly been in a state of paralysis for several months, is still experiencing difficulties in meeting its internal obligations (wages and salaries, pensions, scholarships, the functioning of basic social services and of the State apparatus) and its external commitments, in particular the repayment of the arrears due to the Bretton Woods institutions.

32. Moreover, the thorny problem of arrears of wages and salaries, pensions and scholarships provides a reason for the strike which is still taking place in certain sectors, such as education. The greatest concern of the Central African authorities is therefore to find the necessary resources to resolve this problem of six months' arrears of wages and salaries and several further months' of pensions and scholarships.

33. The groups of affiliated trade unions, which hitherto have demonstrated a great deal of understanding and moderation given the situation, are beginning to show signs of irritation and impatience. Representatives of the trade unions met the head of State on 23 and 28 January 1998 in order to express their grievances, and received a few words of reassurance, for lack of any immediate solutions to their problem, the sensitivity and seriousness of which are no longer in doubt.

VIII. DEPLOYMENT OF THE FORCE

34. There has been no significant change in the arrangements made since the submission of the previous report. MISAB is continuing to ensure security in all neighbourhoods of the Central African capital by occupying 20 surveillance posts and is participating in joint security patrols in conjunction with the Central African security and defence forces in all districts of Bangui.

35. Hold-ups, armed robberies and other criminal acts have diminished considerably thanks both to the progress achieved in disarmament and the constant vigilance instituted by the system of joint patrols. It is worth repeating here, however, the reference made in paragraph 26 to the return of the old form of urban banditry, which is being combated by the Central Office for the Suppression of Banditry.

CONCLUSIONS

36. The International Monitoring Committee once again stresses the necessity and usefulness of extending the implementation of Security Council resolution 1136 (1997) relating to the mandate of MISAB for a period of one to two months after 6 February 1998. This period will enable the various actors concerned to make all the arrangements necessary for the deployment of a multinational force during the post-MISAB period in order to ensure the security conditions required for the implementation of essential reforms and the organization of free, democratic, peaceful, calm and transparent elections.

37. The International Monitoring Committee hopes to continue to enjoy the logistical and technical support of UNDP in order to pursue its twofold mission of ensuring the political direction of MISAB and monitoring the implementation of the Bangui Agreements through continuing mediation until the relevant Security Council decisions have been implemented.

38. In order to avoid any slippage or any risk of a return to square one which might lead to social disruption, it is urged that all measures should be taken at the appropriate levels, including the level of the Secretary-General, to arouse a greater awareness among States, international organizations and financial institutions with a view to providing the necessary assistance to the development of the Central African Republic, as requested in paragraph 9 of resolution 1136 (1997). It is well understood that all these measures will complement the necessary efforts of the Central African authorities. Any contrary approach could jeopardize the opportunity for this country to put the crisis behind it once and for all, thus irreparably causing the failure of this

original experiment with internal settlement which the current mediation effort in the Central African Republic represents.

39. The International Monitoring Committee, as it has repeatedly affirmed, will continue to spare no effort in urging all the parties to the Central African crisis to work with wisdom and dignity for the effective implementation of the Bangui Agreements. This is the price of real and lasting peace.